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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KISL](#) [EG](#)
SUBJECT: HIGH COURT DENIES REGISTRATION TO TWELVE ASPIRING
POLITICAL PARTIES

REF: A. 06 CAIRO 6870

[1](#)B. 06 CAIRO 3582

CLASSIFIED BY: MINISTER-COUNSELOR FOR ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS
WILLIAM R. STEWART, FOR REASONS 1.5 (B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: ON JANUARY 6, EGYPT'S SUPREME ADMINISTRATIVE COURT DENIED THE PETITIONS OF TWELVE ASPIRING POLITICAL PARTIES WHICH WERE APPEALING THE GOVERNMENT'S REJECTION OF THEIR APPLICATIONS TO BE FORMALLY LICENSED. SUCH DECISIONS, COMBINED WITH THE HEAVY-HANDED APPROACH OF THE GOVERNMENT TOWARDS THOSE OPPOSITION PARTIES THAT ARE REGISTERED (SUCH AS AL GHAD), ENGENDER DEEP SKEPTICISM ON THE PART OF EGYPTIAN OPPOSITIONISTS AS TO THE SINCERITY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S REFORM INITIATIVES, SUGGESTS THAT THE RULING PARTY REMAINS UNWILLING TO ALLOW SERIOUS POTENTIAL COMPETITORS ONTO THE POLITICAL PLAYING FIELD, AND SETS BACK THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEGAL, CREDIBLE OPPOSITION PARTIES. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (SBU) ON JANUARY 6, EGYPT'S SUPREME ADMINISTRATIVE COURT DENIED THE PETITIONS OF TWELVE ASPIRING POLITICAL PARTIES WHICH WERE APPEALING THE GOVERNMENT'S REJECTION OF THEIR APPLICATIONS TO BE FORMALLY LICENSED (LIST OF THE GROUPS AT PARA 5). AMONG THE PARTIES DENIED REGISTRATION ARE THE MODERATE-ISLAMIST WASAT ("MIDDLE") PARTY, AND THE NASSERITE AL KARAMA ("DIGNITY") PARTY, BOTH OF WHICH HAVE BEEN FIGHTING FOR LEGAL RECOGNITION FOR YEARS (REFTELS). THE COURT RULED THAT THE TWELVE GROUPS "FELL SHORT" OF MEETING NEW REQUIREMENTS TO FOUND POLITICAL PARTIES (INTRODUCED WHEN THE POLITICAL PARTIES LAW WAS AMENDED IN JULY 2005), SUCH AS THE STIPULATION THAT THE PETITION TO FORM A NEW POLITICAL PARTY BE SIGNED BY AT LEAST ONE THOUSAND FOUNDING MEMBERS, "DRAWN FROM AT LEAST TEN GOVERNORATES WITH NO LESS THAN FIFTY MEMBERS FROM EACH (OF THE TEN GOVERNORATES)." (NOTE: THE POLITICAL PARTIES LAW WAS THE FOCUS OF A RECENT CRITICAL HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH REPORT. END NOTE).

[1](#)3. (C) WASAT CHAIRMAN ABOU ELELA MADY TOLD US THAT HIS PARTY WILL RE-APPLY FOR REGISTRATION, UNDER THE SAME NAME AND WITH THE SAME PLATFORM, AS SOON AS IT CAN GATHER THE REQUISITE ONE THOUSAND SIGNATURES. HE OPINED THAT APPLYING THIS REQUIREMENT RETROACTIVELY TO THE WASAT PARTY WAS "UNFAIR," NOTING THAT THE GROUP'S ORIGINAL REGISTRATION APPLICATION (WHICH THE COURT WAS CONSIDERING) DATES FROM 1996, WHEN ONE THOUSAND SIGNATURES WERE NOT REQUIRED. MADY REMARKED THAT, "THE GOVERNMENT HAS LONG EMBRACED A POLICY OF SANCTIONING MARGINAL, DECORATIVE PARTIES - SO THAT IT CAN BE SAID THAT THERE IS A LARGE NUMBER OF POLITICAL PARTIES IN EGYPT - WHILE NOT ALLOWING GROUPS THAT HAVE THE ABILITY AND SUPPORT TO TRULY COMPETE AGAINST THE NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY (NDP) TO GET IN THE GAME."

[1](#)4. (C) WASAT VICE-CHAIRMAN ESSAM SULTAN COMMENTED TO US THAT

HE WAS "NOT SURPRISED" BY THE COURT'S DECISION, AS "WE KNEW ALL ALONG THAT THE REGIME HAS NO REAL INTENT TO REFORM." IN COMMENTS TO THE PRESS FOLLOWING THE RULING, HAMDEEN SABAHI, LEADER OF THE KARAMA PARTY, DESCRIBED THE COURT'S DECISION AS "A CLEAR MESSAGE FROM THE REGIME TO ALL EGYPTIANS -- FORGET ABOUT FORMING REAL POLITICAL PARTIES." HE NOTED THE "BIZARRE DYNAMIC" THAT UNDER THE POLITQPARTY LAW, "THE NDP HAS THE RIGHT TO SELECT ITS OWN OPPOSITION, ON ITS OWN TERMS." SAAD ABBOD (PROTECT), A MEMBER OF KARAMA'S TOP LEADERSHIP, TOLD US THAT SENIOR PARTY MEMBERS WILL MEET ON JANUARY 8 TO DEBATE WHETHER TO RE-APPLY FOR REGISTRATION. IN A DISPIRITED MOOD, ABBOD COMMENTED THAT HE "REALLY DOES NOT SEE THE POINT" OF RE-APPLYING, AND NOTED THE "HYPOCRISY" OF THE GOVERNMENT - "AT THE SAME TIME THEY SAY THEY ARE PURSUING POLITICAL REFORMS THROUGH CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS, THEY REJECT THE ESTABLISHMENT OF TWELVE PARTIES!"

15. (SBU) THE PARTIES WHOSE APPEALS WERE DENIED ARE: WASAT PARTY, AL KARAMA PARTY, DEMOCRATIC HOPE PARTY, NATIONAL EGYPTIAN PARTY, NATIONAL FREE PARTY, NATIONAL AND PATRIOTIC ALLIANCE, NATIONAL PEACE PARTY, DEMOCRATIC FREEDOM PARTY, MASR EL OMM ("EGYPT THE MOTHER") PARTY, DEMOCRATIC REFORM PARTY, NAHEDET MISR PARTY, AND NAHEDET MISR AL KINANAH.

16. (C) COMMENT: THIS COURT DECISION SEEMS AT ODDS WITH THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT'S STATED COMMITMENT TO REFORM, SUCH AS PRESIDENT HOSNI MUBARAK'S RECENT COMMENTS IN A SPEECH BEFORE PARLIAMENT THAT ONE OF HIS GOALS IN AMENDING EGYPT'S CONSTITUTION IS TO ENCOURAGE GREATER DIVERSITY OF POLITICAL PARTIES. THE DENIAL OF APPLICATIONS FOR REGISTRATION OF NEW POLITICAL PARTIES (BOTH FROM EGYPT'S COURTS AND THE NDP-CONTROLLED POLITICAL PARTIES COMMITTEE) SUGGESTS THAT THE NDP REMAINS UNWILLING TO ALLOW SERIOUS POTENTIAL COMPETITORS ONTO THE POLITICAL PLAYING FIELD. SUCH DECISIONS, COMBINED WITH THE HEAVY-HANDED APPROACH OF THE GOVERNMENT TOWARDS THOSE OPPOSITION PARTIES THAT ARE REGISTERED (SUCH AS AL GHAD) ENGENDER DEEP SKEPTICISM ON THE PART OF EGYPTIAN OPPOSITIONISTS AS TO THE SINCERITY OF THE GOVERNMENT'S REFORM INITIATIVES, AND SETS BACK THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEGAL, CREDIBLE OPPOSITION PARTIES.

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